

# Santo Bakehouse: You knead this place in your life

The Atkins diet has a lot to answer for. It essentially demonised bread, and that is not okay. Carbs were out, and *carne* was in. But let's be real, what is life without eating carbs? Not one worth living if you ask me. And with this logic, off I went in search of some banging bread at Santo Bakehouse, the recently opened bakery on Calle Espíritu Santo, hence the name.

[Santo Bakehouse](#) is owned by the most warm and welcoming pair, George and Valerie. George hails from Bristol in the UK and not to perpetuate the self-deprecating nature of Brits, but he was so modest about what quickly became his very obvious talents as a baker.



It was only when Valerie was talking about their past, that it come to light that George was a participant on the hugely

popular British show, Masterchef. Suffice to say, what he doesn't know about pastry and sourdough starters isn't really worth knowing.

Valerie's background is in education, but when the pair met by chance when George was visiting a friend, they bonded over their mutual love of everyone's favourite carbohydrate, and the rest, as they say, is history.





With their combined expertise and energy, they have formed the ultimate dream team at Santo. Having found the ideal location in Malasaña to make their bread baking dreams a reality, they survived the (sometimes arduous task) of renovating premises, tackling red tape and jumping through numerous Spanish



bureaucratic hoops. But having come out the other side, what they're left with is **a little haven of artisan bread and pastries** that would give a Parisian a run for their money.



As I inhaled a pain au chocolat, whilst simultaneously firing questions at the couple, I discovered that supporting organic suppliers is of the utmost importance to them. Yes, the price is undoubtedly going to be higher than the standard baguette

that perhaps you're used to picking up from your local *supermercado*, but there's a good reason why. The ingredients used are top-notch quality, often from local producers and we all know that the same cannot be said of *pan bimbo*.



Perhaps most excitingly of all was the discovery (as a fellow Brit) that they sell sausage rolls. **I repeat, they sell sausage rolls.** Since I'm unlikely to be in the vicinity of a good-old Gregg's anytime soon (please don't judge my guilty



pleasure), Santo's sausage rolls are a work of art. Buttery, flakey pastry, coupled with some well-seasoned sausage is the kind of indulgent treat that would have me queuing round the block.

In an era where we all seem to be moving at breakneck speed, and before we've even enjoyed what's right in front of us (as we're almost always 'onto the next' fix), there is a lot to be said for people who are honing their craft and pouring not just flour, but a whole lot of love into what they're putting out into the world.

If, like me, the bread basket is your Achilles heel in life, I urge you to pay Santo a visit because frankly, you 'knead' this place in your life.

## Santo Bakehouse

- Follow them on Instagram: [@santobakehouse](#)
- Address: Calle Espiritu Santo 25

Article by Cat Powell [@littlemissmadrid](#)

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# Fish & Chips 2.0. – made in



# Spain with local, fresh ingredients

Building on its success in Barcelona, [The Fish & Chips Shop](#) has just opened its first restaurant in Madrid's Chueca neighborhood, and aren't we lucky! The Alam brothers, Mani and Majid, decided to open their first location in Barcelona in February 2015, after searching the city for a fish and chips antidote to a long night of partying, to no avail.

Since then, they've opened eight Fish & Chip Shops in Barcelona, and now their first in the capital.



Image by Cristina Góngora

Situated on Calle Campoamor 2, their Madrid location is a

lovely, small eatery with an open kitchen, modern decor and international magazines dispersed throughout.



Image by Cristina Góngora

The menu features an updated version of the traditional British comfort food, made with top-quality, locally-sourced ingredients. It'll cure your hangover—as it should—but without leaving you regretting a single bite.

All the dishes here are made with prime ingredients from across Spain. For example, the potatoes and hake fish come straight from Galicia; the highly refined extra virgin olive oil that they fry with, [Olis Bargallo](#), comes from Barcelona; the bread comes from [Panic](#), an organic bread shop in Madrid's Conde Duque area; the probiotic drinks come from [Rudo](#), also based in the capital. Just to give you an idea.

## What we ate and drank

I ordered a natural white wine, and James chose an IPA. The manager, Gonzalo, told us they'll soon be serving beer from [Oso Brew](#), a local brewery that we've written about on several occasions, with a bar in La Latina. Next time I want to try their kombuchas and homemade lemonade.





Accompanying our drinks were delicious edamame, cooked in extra virgin olive oil and topped with [maldon salt](#).

As for the food, Gonzalo recommended we order a few menu highlights. To start, we had the artichoke flowers coated and sauteed in extra virgin olive oil. They were so tender and flavorful.



We also had the “bravas de pulpo rebozadas” which I’d roughly translate as fried octopus balls! Gonzalo told us it’s made with battered octopus that’s fried in tempura with panko breadcrumbs, dressed with a spicy sauce of rocoto pepper, ají and chipotle; and topped with Kimchi, mint and citric mayonnaise. Plus perfectly cooked French fries with paprika. This dish was amazing.





Image by Cristina Góngora

For the main dishes, we went with the two stars: The Fish & Chips (the photo features a medium-sized portion) and The Lobster Roll.





Their version of fish and chips is made with fresh fish from Galicia, battered in tempura, with cereal to give a bit of

crunch. It comes with a side of French fries made with fish masala spices, plus a homemade tartar and mango chutney sauce. So satisfying.







Image by Cristina Góngora

The lobster roll is made with fresh lobster sautéed in smoked butter, drizzled with a lobster head, celery and mayonnaise sauce, heaped on a buttered brioche with lamb's lettuce. Served with a side of authentic coleslaw and addictive sweet potato fries. Heaven.



For dessert we had the chocolate ganache, typical of Cataluña. The portion was the perfect compliment to our meal.

All in all I'd say this was one of the tastiest meals I've had in a long time, and I'm happy that this restaurant is supporting local producers while giving a quality spin to the

UK's most traditional fast food dish, as well as many other menu items that I can't wait to try.

## The Fish & Chips Shop Madrid

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#) & [IG](#)
  - Address: Calle Campoamor 2
  - Metros: Alonso Martínez or Chueca
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## Shooloongkan: Madrid's most authentic Chinese restaurant and hot pot experience

Finding Chinese food in Madrid is easy, but finding authentic Chinese food requires some work. It's normal for flavors to be subdued and menus to be adapted in order to please the local taste palate, but sometimes you just want to order the real deal. And even though inauthentic doesn't necessarily translate to a bad meal—just because they don't eat chow mein in China doesn't make it less delicious—there is a glorified quality about eating a meal as it's prepared in its home culture.

In the case of hot pot, that home culture is Sichuan province in southwest China. A quick Google search for “hot pot Madrid” brings up plenty of options to choose from, but if

authenticity is what you're after, Xiaolongkan (sometimes spelled ShooLoongKan) in Legazpi has a leg up on the others: the restaurant actually comes from Sichuan.





*“This is one of the only real Chinese restaurants in Madrid,” proclaims Ella, one of the restaurant’s managers. “Everything*

*you see inside here came directly from China,” she says, pointing to the stone tables, the paper lanterns, the bamboo dividers.*

Xiaolongkan is a franchise that has roots in Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan. The Legazpi location opened in August 2020 in the middle of the pandemic and is the company’s debut in Spain. Just a stone’s throw away from Madrid’s Chinatown in Usera, the entire meal—from the ornate decor to the complimentary orange slices after eating—is designed to perfectly replicate an experience of eating hot pot in China.





One of the biggest obstacles to trying a new cuisine is the fear of not knowing what to do and committing some type of

faux pas. And while there is no way to stop that from happening—you just have to graciously accept it—there are **a few tips to keep in mind if you've never had hot pot so you don't feel completely clueless.**

## **1. Hot pot is a type of fondue, not a soup.**

When you sit down with your placemat-sized paper menu, it's hard not to feel immediately overwhelmed by the number of options, especially if you're unsure of what hot pot is. You'll choose the type of broth and then an assortment of raw meats and vegetables, which are cooked by being dipped or bathed in the boiling liquid. You'll remove the cooked items, dip them in your sauce, and eat them, but you generally don't drink the broth, as with soup.





## **2. Don't be overeager with your level of spiciness.**

The three broth options at Xiaolongkan are the traditional Sichuan chili broth, a mushroom broth, and a tomato broth. Only the Sichuan chili broth is spicy and you can choose the level of spice, from one chili pepper to three chili peppers. If you are clearly unfamiliar with the menu, the server will politely but assertively recommend you choose the one chili pepper option, and you should follow their advice.

**Remember, this is a menu that was designed in Sichuan for Sichuanese tastes.** If you want to add more spice later, you always can. You can also have multiple broths at your table if



you want to try more than one.

### 3. Explore options outside of your comfort zone for your dipping items.

If you've ever been curious about eating innards, this is the place to try them. After all, hot pot is all about playing with texture, since everything ends up tasting like your broth and dipping sauce. Many of the "recommended" menu items are visceral—thinly-sliced kidneys, blood sausage, duck gizzards—but only because they're crowd pleasers. If you have the stomach for it, give at least one of them a try.



## **4. Order your veggies à la carte.**

The mixed plate of vegetables may look appetizing, but it includes an unnecessary amount of romaine lettuce. Don't skip your vegetables, just handpick the ones you most want to eat. And while an assortment of vegetables may sound ideal for non-meat eaters, none of the broths are vegetarian.

## **5. The sesame dipping sauce will be your best friend.**

After a big pitcher of water, that is. The bowl of Chinese sesame paste you're given when you sit down is to dip your cooked items after pulling them from the chili broth, so the sweetness of the sesame paste can mellow out the intensity of the chilis. You can keep the sesame sauce as is or add to it from the buffet-style condiment bar with items like fresh cilantro leaves, chopped scallions, oyster sauce, different vinegars, or even more chili oil if you're feeling particularly intrepid.





# **Final thoughts on Shooloongkan (a.k.a. Xiaolongkan)**

At Xiaolongkan, the ritual of preparing the food is just as enjoyable as actually eating it. There's a carnal satisfaction that comes from gliding a thinly sliced piece of Wagyu beef over the surface of the bubbling broth, watching as it literally cooks before your eyes.

And the highlight of your meal may very well be finding that meatball or mushroom that you had lost in the pot and completely forgotten about—until you unsuspectingly fish it back out 20 minutes later, imbued with the maximum amount of flavor it can possibly hold. Imagine the feeling when you find a five euro bill in your pocket, and the sensation is similar.

**After a year that's been all about social distancing, there's something refreshing about a meal that's so brazenly communal.** Hot pot is unavoidably served family-style, where everyone at the table flavors the same broth by dipping their food (there's a temperature check for everyone who enters and the boiling liquid is a natural disinfectant, so use the same precautions you would when visiting any restaurant). It's fun and sociable and authentic, but, above all, it's tasty.

**Hot pot at Xiaolongkan checks all the boxes, just as long as you can withstand the heat.**

## Shooloongkan info

- IG: [Shooloongkan](#)
  - Address: Calle Maestro Arbos 3
  - Metro: Legazpi
  - Reservations recommended
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## Gustazio: Enjoy pizza that isn't pizza near Legazpi

When I tell my friends they have to try the *pinsa* at Gustazio, one of Legazpi's most unique Italian restaurants, the response is always a confused stare. "Are you saying pizza?" they inevitably ask.

**"No, *pinsa*."**

And just like the subtle difference between the words pizza and *pinsa*, it's just as easy to mistake the physical foods, as well. The *pinsa* at Gustazio looks like, well, a pizza. It has a crusty bread base and most of the topping options sound familiar from any pizzeria—margherita, four cheese, vegetarian—but once someone begins to point out the differences, the *pinsa* begins to set itself apart.



## What's the difference between pinsa and pizza?

For starters, pinsa dough is too delicate to be tossed like its pizza cousin, so it's stretched and squeezed by hand, resulting in an oval shape instead of the classic pizza pie circle. And while a Neapolitan pizza has a relatively smooth finish, **a defining feature of pinsa are the crackly hills and crevasses that crater the surface.**

The differences between them, however, are not just aesthetic. Traditional pizza dough is made entirely with wheat flour, while pinsa is made with a precise mix of wheat, rice, and soy flours and a lot more water, creating a **much lighter crust that's easier on the stomach.**





Anyone who's been to a [Neapolitan pizzeria](#) is no stranger to that moment after drinking a beer or two and eating three-quarters of a pizza where you just can't go on and you want to save the rest but then you regrettably wonder... *is it even worth saving just a quarter of a pizza?*

And even though you know the answer is yes, you decide no, it's not worth it, and persevere until your plate is empty and your insides are bloated, left only with a familiar and satisfying sense of self-loathing.



But after eating an entire *acciuga pinsa* topped with caramelized tomato, capers, black olives, and anchovies, I was full but not bursting. I even had room for a ricotta-filled and pistachio-topped cannoli dessert, which was just the sweet ending I needed.

In the wrong hands, pinsa can easily turn into something pretentious, like when you talk about sushi with a food snob friend (oh that isn't sushi you're eating, it's *nigiri*). Thankfully, the unassuming staff at Gustazio never cross that line.

The server Daniele, a native Roman, introduces himself and then the menu to each table with natural affability, educating

diners about pinsa without any hint that he's done so hundreds of times before and recommending a suitable wine or craft beer, all from Italy.

**Should you need a drink to whet your appetite, Daniele pours an aperol spritz that's perfectly proportioned.**





Pinsa is generally associated with Rome, but Gustazio's owners all hail from Milan. **Luca, Fabrizio, Brunella, and Vania**

**opened their pinseria in 2018 in Legazpi, which also serves home-baked focaccias and fresh pasta that's imported directly from Italy.**

Even though 2020 has been just as hard on them as other restaurants, all three expressed an endearing gratitude for the neighborhood.

**"This barrio is amazing,"** Vania professed while talking about the support they've received. **"We're really lucky to be where we are."**

## **We can't wait for "aperitivo" nights to return**

More than anything, the neighborhood is eagerly awaiting the return of the Wednesday aperitivo, a weekly event that's on hold until further notice due to COVID restrictions. In classic Milanese fashion, customers buy a drink and then have unlimited access to a revolving selection of appetizers, with options including tostadas topped with burrata and Sicilian pistachios, roasted slices of eggplant, various Italian cold cuts, and of course, pinsa.

Until aperitivo nights return, **Gustazio is open Wednesday to Sunday for lunch and dinner to dine in or pick up, and will be available for delivery via Glovo by the end of November.**

So the next time you have a craving for pizza, don't dismiss the idea of a pinsa from Gustazio to satisfy the urge. And

since you're choosing the "light" option, don't feel guilty about capping off the meal with a fluffy piece of tiramisu to reward yourself.

## Gustazio

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#) & IG: [gastrobargustazio](#)
- **Hours:** Wednesday–Sunday for lunch and dinner (indoor dining and pickup); and delivery via Glovo will be available by end of November.
- **Address:** Calle Embajadores, 197
- **Metro:** Legazpi

Looking for more Italian spots in Madrid? Here's a few of our favorites:

- [Fratelli Figurato](#) (Alonso Cano)
  - [Nina Pasta Bar](#) (La Latina)
  - [Retrogusto Bar](#) (Ópera or Sol)
  - [Casa Picsa](#) (Rios Rosas)
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# Where to celebrate Thanksgiving 2020 in Madrid

Can you believe it's November already?! I don't know about you, but I still feel stuck in March. Whether we believe it or not, the holiday season is upon us and after the year we've had, I can tell this Thanksgiving is going to be even more special than ever.

Although I'm not American, I'm very familiar with the holiday and as the founder of [Eat Out Madrid](#), the conversations have started to happen as people get ready to celebrate. So I thought I'd put together a one-stop shop to help you decide where to enjoy some great food without the stress of searching yourself. But be quick—reservations are filling up!

*Disclaimer: What you're about to read may (and probably will) make you very hungry, so make sure you've eaten beforehand to avoid stomach rumbling...*

## Best Thanksgiving meals in Madrid 2020

### [The Grazing Berry](#)

A grazing box that you can order to eat in or pick up for €35–€75, including:

- Charcuterie, cheese, crackers, fruit, pickles, olives & nuts
- Vegan cheese, crackers, vegetables, fruit, pickles, olives, & nuts (V)

You can also enjoy some bar nibbles (no pre-ordering necessary):

- Corona charcuterie cone €8
- Vegan corona Cone (V) €8
- Vegan pumpkin hummus with apples and crackers (V) €10
- Turkey, cheese, cranberry sauce & arugula sliders €12
- Mini cone box €15 (pre-ordering advised)
- Mini Thanksgiving box €25 (pre-ordering advised)

**Dates:** Friday 20th & Saturday 21st from 7pm–10pm

**Pre-order boxes:** [Instagram](#) or email [thegrazingberry@gmail.com](mailto:thegrazingberry@gmail.com)  
(by Wednesday 18th November)

**Address:** Calle de San Vicente Ferrer, 57



[The Grazing Berry](#) is offering a gourmet grazing box for Thanksgiving

## [Mazal Bagels](#)

Stop by for a slice of pumpkin pie, apple pie, cranberry pumpkin bread, apple crumble or pumpkin cheesecake (desserts change daily and prices vary).

Pre-order a [whole pumpkin pie to take out](#) for €21

**Dates:** Now through December 2020

**Address:** Calle de Alonso Cano, 30





*Order a ridiculously good pumpkin pie from [Mazal Bagels](#)*

## [Carmencita Bar](#), [La Gringa](#) & [Bodegas Rivas Madrid](#)

Three-course menu for €35, served at all three restaurants, including:

- Thanksgiving spreads or pumpkin soup topped with goat's cheese
- Oven-roasted turkey with gravy & stuffing, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes topped with toasted marshmallows, creamy bacon Brussel sprouts, roasted corn on the cob, cranberry sauce, mixed bread basket

- Pumpkin pie topped with whipped cream or apple pie
- Cranberry Bellini, red or white wine or beer

You can also pre-order the turkey and trimmings for takeout.

**Dates:** Thursday 26th & Friday 27th, lunch from 1pm and dinner from 7pm; Saturday 28th, dinner from 7pm.

**Reservations required:** +34 679 183 399

#### **Locations:**

- [Carmencita Bar](#): Calle de San Vicente Ferrer, 51
- [La Gringa](#): Calle de San Vicente Ferrer, 57
- [Bodegas Rivas](#): Calle de la Palma, 61



*Enjoy a traditional Thanksgiving meal at Carmencita Bar, La Gringa and Bodegas Rivas*

## [The Irish Rover](#)

3-course menu (excluding drinks) €22, including:

- Brazilian beef salad with pineapple chutney
- Roast turkey with potato puree, gravy, cranberry sauce and roasted vegetables
- Dark chocolate brownie
- Tea or coffee

**Dates:** Thursday 26th, dinner from 7pm

**Reservations required:** email [almudena.ortiz@grupomoby.com](mailto:almudena.ortiz@grupomoby.com) or



phone +34 61 000 7831

**Address:** Av. de Brasil, 7

## [Trikki Cuisine](#)

Three-course meal for €26, including:

- Pumpkin cream soup
- Roasted turkey with gravy, green bean casserole, mashed potatoes, baked pumpkin, New Orleans dirty style rice, side of sweet bread
- Pumpkin pie
- 1 beer, wine or soft drink

You can also pre-order the turkey and trimmings for takeout.

**Dates:** Thursday 26th, lunch from 1pm and dinner from 7pm

**Reservations required:** [Website](#), [Instagram](#) or phone +34 91 110 5815

**Address:** Calle de Sta Engracia, 109

Read our full [article on Trikki Cuisine](#)

# James Joyce Irish Pub

Three-course meal for €25, including:

- Goat's cheese salad with roasted cranberries in red wine, walnuts and citric vinaigrette or salmon & cod fish cakes, rocket (arugula) and green chilli salsa or pumpkin soup, cheddar cheese and apple garnish
- Roast turkey, stuffing and cranberry sauce or roasted pumpkin, mozzarella and caramelized onion (V) or roast beef with horseradish and Yorkshire pudding. *All mains served with traditional seasonal vegetables*
- Pumpkin pie with bourbon chantilly cream or chocolate coulant with vanilla ice-cream and warm chocolate sauce

**Dates:** Thursday 26th, dinner at 5.30pm or 8pm

**Reservations required:** [Website](#) (€10 non-refundable deposit required & pre-order meal choice before Monday 23rd November 2020)

**Address:** Calle de Alcalá, 59



Book a three-course Thanksgiving dinner at [James Joyce](#)

## [Dog & Fox Urban Kitchen](#)

Three-course menu for €28, including:

- Jalapeño peppers with guacamole
- Sweetcorn & cheddar cream soup with a pork belly topping



- Oven-roasted turkey with cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, sweet carrots with “Dog & Fox” special sauce & gravy
- Dessert: Tiramisu or Tres Leches
- 1 glass of wine or beer

**Dates:** Thursday 26th, lunch from 12.30pm and dinner from 8pm

**Reservations required:** [Instagram](#), WhatsApp +34 63 968 5009 or phone +34 91 2659 765

**Address:** Calle de Rodríguez San Pedro, 64, local 1

## [J&J Books & Coffee](#)

In addition to their regular brunch items, J&J's will also be offering a special bagel brunch, including:

- Cranberry bagel with turkey (or vegan sausage), potatoes, stuffing & gravy

**Dates:** Saturday 28th & Sunday 29th, brunch from 11am

**Reservations:** [Website](#)

**Address:** Calle del Espíritu Santo, 47

## Harveys Cocktail Bar

Three-course menu for €29 with a drink or €34 with a cocktail, including:

- Pumpkin cream soup with corn bread
- Roast turkey, cranberry sauce, gravy, chestnut cream and violet potatoes
- Pumpkin pie or apple crumble

**Dates:** Thursday, November 26th, from 8pm

**Reservations:** +34 91 0817 825

**Address:** Calle de Fuencarral, 70

## Oliver Nicols

Two-course menu for €12, including:

- Roast turkey with mashed potato, gravy, green beans casserole and cranberry sauce
- Pumpkin pie with cream

**Dates:** Thursday, November 26th & Friday 27th

**Reservation:** +34 91 081 3747

**Address:** Calle de la Santísima Trinidad, 6

## [Roll Madrid](#)

Three-course menu for €35, including:

- Pumpkin cream soup
- Roast turkey with bread filling, mashed potato, sweet potato, creamed corn, brussels sprouts, cranberry sauce, bread
- Assorted desserts
- Welcome glass of cava

You can also pre-order the turkey and trimmings for takeout and delivery

**Dates:** Thursday 26th, Friday 27th & Saturday 28th

**Reservations:** [Website](#)

**Address:** Calle de Amanuel, 23

*Read more about [Roll Madrid](#) in our previous article.*



## NuBel

Three-course menu and choir performance by Gospel Society with drinks for €40, including:

- Boston-style clam chowder with mussels, artichokes with cheese and ham, roasted pumpkin with goat's cheese and tempura fried seeds, salmon carpaccio with pickles and a winter salad
- Truffled turkey roulade, served with Brussel sprouts, mashed potato, sweet potato, miso roasted carrots and cranberry Sauce
- Apple pie with cinnamon ice cream
- Beer, wine, soft drinks

**Dates:** Thursday 26th, 8pm

**Reservations:** [Website](#)

**Address:** Reina Sofía Museum, Calle de Argumosa, 43

Read more about [Nubel – the Reina Sofía Museum's stunning restaurant](#)

## Eat My Trip

Special Thanksgiving brunch dishes, including:

- Turkey waffles
- Pumpkin Pie

**Dates:** Thursday 26th – Sunday 30th, 2020

**Reservations:** not accepted.

**Address:** Calle de la Moreria, 11

## Happy Thanksgiving 2020!

By [Valentina Ruffoni](#), founder of the [Eat Out Madrid](#) Facebook community. Make sure to join and find out about more great food spots around the city.

***Also read Valentina's previous articles:***

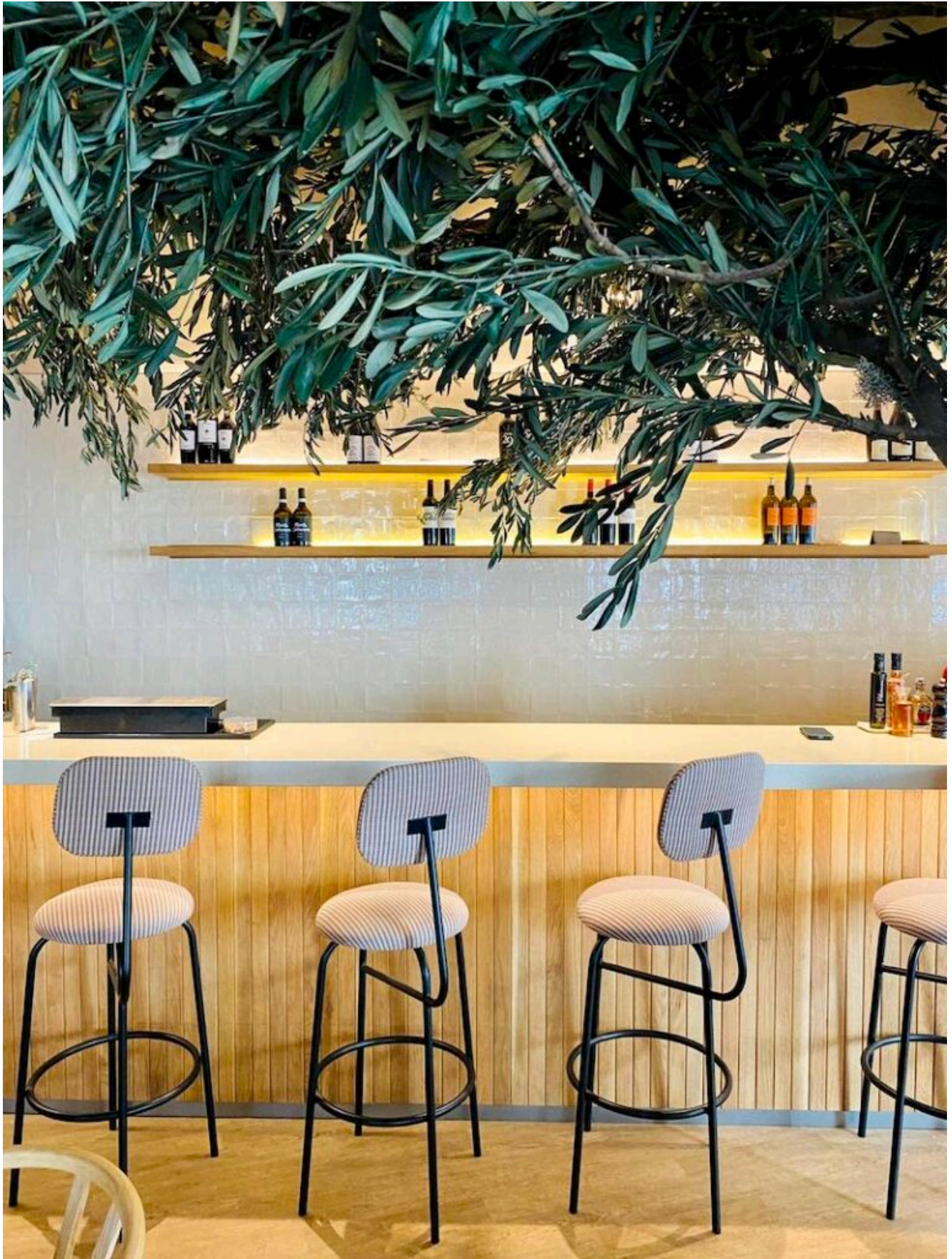
- [Eat Out Madrid's top 5 places for takeout and delivery right now](#)
  - [Lockdown Diaries: Valentina, bringing communities of people together through food and keeping spirits high](#)
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# Lettera Trattoria Moderna: I love beige carbs and I cannot lie

There is most definitely a pattern emerging when it comes to my most [recent blog posts](#). I love Italian food. I could wholeheartedly eat pasta day after day, and never get bored. Why don't I then? I hear you ask... Well frankly, my waistline can't take it. But I am a fully fledged member of the pizza and pasta fan club.

During these times when I'm unable to return back to the UK (my home country), Italy is the next best thing in terms of comfort food to me. In lieu of a pie, a roast or a fry-up, Italian food cooked with love and attention feels nurturing and the perfect pick-me-up as the temperatures start to drop.





So last Saturday (during yet another *punte* spent in the city), I enjoyed a leisurely lunch at [Lettera Trattoria](#)



[Moderna](#) – a restaurant that's sandwiched between Gran Via and Chueca, sporting some seriously scandi-chic decor. And I had the very best kind of carb coma.



As Madrileños can't currently travel outside of the city, the place was heaving with a lovely lunchtime buzz. We munched on some delicious focaccia whilst perusing the menu and sipped on a couple of glasses of red – a great recommendation from our super attentive waiter.





We shared the show-stopping spaghetti to start, which is made and served from a carved-out parmesan wheel – certainly not a



case of style over substance. It was delicious and, as a cheese lover, gluttonously good.



Fresh spaghetti with parmesan. Image from [Lettera](#)

Next came an artichoke pizza and a slow-cooked ragu. We both left empty plates, but ensured that we left room for a pud. We weren't disappointed.



Pappardelle pasta with slow-cooked ragu. Image from [Lettera](#)

We shared the “Tarta de Agustina” – a cake served with ricotta and a crumble made of almonds. It was one of the most unusual, but tastiest desserts that I’ve had in a long time. We fought to munch every last mouthful.



Tarta de Agustina dessert. Image from [Lettera](#)

Lettera Trattoria really lives up to its namesake – moderna. It is home-cooking with a modern twist, served in stylish surroundings with knowledgeable staff. It's a pairing as perfect as Dolce and Gabbana.





We left full, happy and ready for a nap. So while we may not make it to Italy anytime soon, you can enjoy La Dolce Vita a

little closer to home.

By *Cat Powell* [@littlemissmadrid](#)

## Lettera Trattoria

- [Website](#) & IG: [@lettera\\_trattoria\\_moderna](#)
- Address: Calle de la Reina 20, Madrid
- Phone: 918 053 432
- Metros: Gran Vía, Sevilla & Banco de España

## You may also like:

- [Nina Pasta Bar: Don't walk right past'a](#)
- [Retrogusto Bar: My best-kept Madrid secret](#)
- [Camoatí: An incredibly romantic Argentine bistro in La Latina](#)

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# Nina Pasta Bar: Don't walk right past'a

Like most people living their best PL life (post lockdown, incase you were wondering), I am making it my mission to eat

out with gusto, and plough some money back into the hospitality industry—albeit rather selfishly as I wind up well fed, so it's not entirely altruistic.

However, there's one place in the city that I keep going back to. Not only in order to support a small business, but because their food is beyond delicious and the service feels akin to being greeted by old friends. Nina Pasta Bar is the restaurant equivalent of my new favourite toy, and long may it continue.

Nina's is tucked away, just off of Calle Ruda, making it easy to miss and the definition of a hidden gem. The menu isn't overly long; instead they focus on a few specialities, such as spaghetti carbonara which they absolutely nail, every.single.time.





*Spaghetti carbonara (image by @pria.rao)*

I'm currently in the midst of a love affair with their gnocchi bravos, an Italian take on the Spanish classic. They're little panfried pockets of deliciousness, served with a spicy bravas sauce and a creamy alioli. Challenge yourself to share the dish: I inhale an entire serving these days and don't break a sweat.



*Pizzeta (image by @pria.rao)*

There's no shortage of places to dine out at in Madrid, but there is a shortage of places (in my opinion) where you literally don't want the meal to end. From the cosy yet understated decor, to the reasonably priced vino tinto and the delectable specials, each morsel tastes as heavenly as the next—you can taste that it's been cooked with love.





Most recently, I had the pumpkin gnocchi with pancetta and I genuinely had to pace myself, such was the urge to faceplate into this hug in a bowl of meal.





*Pumpkin gnocchi with pancetta*

In light of the weird times that we're currently living through, Nina's feels homely and a safe cocoon (when, frankly, the outside world is leaning heavily towards doom and gloom).



*Tiramisu*

The service is always warm and welcoming, the tiramisu always decadently rich and the glasses of wine always err on the side of what I affectionately refer to as a 'generous pour'.

Torn between shouting about Nina Pasta Bar from the rooftops and wanting to keep it quiet so that I can still get a 'reso', here I am recommending it wholeheartedly as words cannot 'espresso' how much I love this spot. Sorry, couldn't resist topping and tailing with a pasta pun.



By Cat Powell [@littlemissmadrid](#)

## Nina Pasta Bar

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#) & IG: [@ninapastabar](#)
- **Address:** [Calle de Santa Ana 21](#)
- **Metro:** La Latina
- **Phone:** +34911374660

## Also check out:

- [El Brote: a new mushroom restaurant in the heart of El Rastro](#)
- [Camoatí: an incredibly romantic Argentinian bistro in La Latina](#)
- [Retrogusto Bar: my best-kept Madrid secret](#)

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## Retrogusto Bar: My best-kept Madrid secret

I never thought I'd share this place with the world, but the time has come. Retrogusto is a little Italian bar and kitchen located near Plaza Mayor and Opera, right in the city center. Yet it doesn't feel that way. It feels more like you're in a small town, as it's situated in a quiet plaza with tables set out under a beautiful tree that provides warmth and shade.



I've been living in Madrid for over 12 years now, and this is by far one of my favorite spots in the city. One of the main reasons is that big tree! Another reason is because it's so simple and down to earth.



The restaurant has two terraces: one in the plaza; and the other under a residential building. The indoor area is small and cute, decorated with mis-matching vintage furniture and nicknacks.



You can sit anywhere and enjoy your time here. But that tree is something special; I've spent many wonderful evenings under its canopy...





James and I first stumbled upon Retrogusto when we were living near Sol a few years ago, and it quickly became our oasis. We'd always find a table under the tree on weeknights and order several glasses of wine or beer—each round would come with delicious olives, Italian cheese or a surprise *aperitivo* that was always good. For dinner, James would get the meatballs and I'd go for the piadina or eggplant parmesan.





But last time we went, the menu had changed so we tried something new. James got the pasta special with zucchini cream sauce that he's still dreaming about, no joke. I went for the Caprese salad—light and fresh.



We didn't get a spot under the tree last time either, because we went on the weekend for a change and it was full. Instead, we grabbed a seat in the other outdoor area, and now we know where all the owners' friends and regulars hang out!





Before leaving we asked the owner, Silvana, if she could tell us a bit about her story. She's originally from Sardinia, Italy, and came to Madrid 12 years ago, after living in Ireland and working in accounting. She wanted a change and decided that Spain was pretty similar to Italy, without it being Italy (if that makes sense).





Silvana started out working at a bar in La Latina. Her friends owned Retrogusto at the time, and she would come to hang out and help them. When they decided to leave Spain, she naturally took over and has been running it for seven years now. Her brother works in the kitchen and she's out front. "I don't cook," she says.

Our conversation went on for quite a while, covering the new laws restricting Madrid restaurants and business owners, to the lives of freelancers. I won't get into the details but I will say that she treated us to a round of shots by the end of our meal. Grazie!

**Before leaving I asked Silvana what her favorite thing about the bar is: "Its simplicity. It's like being with your family**

in a small town.”

I couldn't agree with her more. Although the secret's out, let's make sure it stays that way.

## **Retrogusto Bar:**

- [Facebook](#) & IG: [@retrogustobar](#)
- Address: Plaza del Biombo
- Metro: Opera or Sol

*Note: Because of the restricted closing hours for bars and restaurants right now (11pm) she's opening a little earlier lately, around 7:30pm.*

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## **Refusion Delivery: Where refugee chefs prepare authentic flavors from Syria, Sudan and Venezuela**

Refusion Delivery opened last year with a powerful mission: to help refugees find a new home and stable job in Madrid, while also giving them the opportunity to share their culinary

culture with their adopted city. All the restaurant's chefs are refugees who bring their family recipes to the menu—that's why you'll find Sudanese falafel, Syrian hummus and Venezuelan tequeños in the same place.

I first found out about Refusion Delivery through one of the five owners, Tina Samson, who also co-founded [Madrid for Refugees](#), a nonprofit organization that's played a big hand in creating this restaurant. But I finally went for the first time last Friday with a good friend of mine, and I'm so glad we went!



*From left to right: me (US), Tina (US), Alex (Sudan), Danny (Venezuela), Hala (Syria) and Souhaib (Morocco)*



Located in Madrid's Tetuan neighborhood, the restaurant has a welcoming and down-to-earth vibe. It's small and narrow, with just a few tables set up alongside the long metallic bar. The food is delicious, vegan friendly and great for sharing. Luckily, throughout our meal we had the chance to talk with Tina and the chefs who were preparing deliveries, serving tables, and chatting with customers non stop. It was great to see how busy they were.

Since opening in May 2019, Refusion Delivery has been featured in major publications. The first article to cause a lot of commotion was by [El Comidista](#), El País' food column. This led to a more [in-depth article and video](#) by El País in March—once it was published, Tina tells me that they couldn't even handle all the orders and crowds that started flooding in.

*In this video interview by El País (in Spanish), the chefs at Refusion Delivery say they learned how to cook from their mothers and love being able to share their home recipes. Working here also allows them to have a stable job and future.*

Although Refusion Delivery limited their hours and menu a bit due to the pandemic, they've been open for business for the past several months, offering in-person dining, takeout and delivery. Tina also says it's been amazing how much support they've received from the neighborhood.

## **Now, back to our night.**

As soon as we walked in, Tina started telling us the whole story and introduced us to the chefs. First we met Alex from Sudan, who's been in Madrid for four years and likes to sing

while she cooks. Part of her family is from Egypt, so her dishes have a mix of Egyptian-Sudanese flavors. Then we met head chef Hala, who's originally from Damascus, Syria, and studied Fine Arts. She came to Madrid with her family in 2013 and together they owned a Syrian restaurant in Alcobendas for many years.

Lastly, we got to talk to Danny from Venezuela, who's been living in Madrid for one year and previously worked in several restaurants in Colombia. He also helped my friend Riju and I place a tack on the world map near the entrance, indicating where we're from (New Delhi and NYC, respectively). It's a fun way to show how international the eatery is.



*When you go, make sure to place a tack on the world map to indicate where you're from!*

## Here's what we had:

First we tried Alex's amazing **falafels** inspired by Egyptian and Sudanese recipes. They're made with garbanzo, parsley and onion, and come with the sauce of your choice—Riju had the spicy peanut sauce from Sudan and I went for the cooler yogurt and garlic sauce from Venezuela.



*Egyptian-Sudanese falafels (vegan)*

We also had the **Fatush salad** that came with fried Arabic bread on top; the crunchiness gave a wonderful contrast to the fresh veggies. Both of these starters are vegan and perfect for sharing!





*Fatoush salad topped with fried Arabic bread (vegan)*

Onto the main dishes: **Hurak bi isbau** was my favorite dish of the night, and also one that Tina raved about. It's a traditional Syrian stew made of lentils and homemade wheat dough—with a rich, hearty and sweet flavor. For me, it's the epitome of comfort food. For Hala, it's much more than that.

Hala told us (in fluent English) that back in Damascus, this was a typical dish that women would make for each other—they'd start cooking it in the morning and then once it was room temperature in the evening, they'd sit around in a circle and gossip while eating bowls of stew. Sounds like a fun evening!



*Hurak bi isbau: comforting lentil stew (vegan)*

We also ordered **Shish**, a Syrian skewer with chicken and fresh vegetables. It's covered in a flavorful sauce that you get to sop up with Arabic bread and freshly made rice—the plate was sparkly clean by the time we were done with it.





*Shish: chicken skewer with rice and vegetables*

To top it all off, Tina surprised us with **baklava**. My dad's from Greece so I've had my share of baklava growing up, and I can tell you this was totally different! Hala makes it with her own syrup mix instead of honey, so it's very vegan friendly, sweet and tasty.





*Baklava with a honey substitute (vegan)*

The quality of the food is fantastic and prices are very reasonable. Not only that, but by coming here or ordering delivery, you're supporting a sustainable mission while getting a wonderful taste of family-style dishes and stories from around the world.



All in all, I felt uplifted by going to this restaurant. It gave me hope that there are good things being done—that there

are places that are helping people find new, safe homes, so they can build a life for themselves where they can be themselves.

I'll definitely be going back (specifically to try the hummus and tequeños) and if I ever throw a big event in the future, I'll contact them for catering. I hope that by sharing this article, you'll want to come here too and enjoy Refusion Delivery as much as I do.

## Refusion Delivery

Read more about the restaurant in English in [Global Shakers'](#) article.

Meet the [team behind Refusion Delivery here](#).

See the full [menu and order here](#).

- [Website](#), [Facebook](#) & IG: [@refusiondelivery](#)
- Address: Calle Capitán Blanco Argibay 65
- Metro: Valdeacederas (line 1)
- Phone: 669 581 992
- Hours: Wed-Fri 7:30-11pm | Sat 1-4pm & 7:30-11pm

## You may also like:

[5 best places to order vegan and vegetarian takeout in Madrid](#)



[Eat Out Madrid's top 5 places for takeaway and delivery right now](#)

[Food4heroes: Madrid's restaurants come together to provide hospital workers with free meals](#)

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## **Los Costilla: BBQ ribs and pulled pork sandwiches that will blow your mind**

A few weeks ago I heard about a place called Los Costilla that serves *really* authentic ribs and pulled pork sandwiches. One person came to mind: Gwildor... I was just a toddler watching TV with my dad (not sure the movie was appropriate for my age, oops!) but I'll never forget Gwildor drinking BBQ sauce and having ribs and chicken in *Masters of the Universe*. Since then, pork ribs covered in real American BBQ sauce have been one of my favorite dishes.



But back to the present. So, I went to Los Costilla on calle Ayala on a Friday night, wearing my best clothes for the occasion: shorts and a loose-fitting t-shirt. It was long enough to cover my belly—very important for a meal like this. We got there a little after 8 pm, a bit too early for Spaniards, but I just couldn't wait any longer.

As soon as I saw the menu written over the counter, I started wondering what I was going to devour. Good thing we didn't have to choose—Los Costilla offers a tasting menu (pictured below) that comes with four *sanduches*, fries, salad and a rack of fall-off-the-bone oven-baked pork ribs. And you can dip it all in a selection of their delicious homemade sauces.



It's perfect for two people, you'll most likely have to take some of it home.

## **Less talk, more food.**

My first bite went to the Porchetta sandwich: Two different pork meat cuts—tender loin and rib—mixed with sweet onion and arugula. My second bite went to the pulled pork with coleslaw salad and BBQ sauce. No words.





Once my side of the table was empty, I finally got to meet my beloved ribs. Los Costilla do not play around. The meat just fell softly off the bone with a little help of my teeth.



Finally, as if that wasn't enough, we ordered dessert: fried oreos topped with vanilla ice cream and caramel and chocolate syrup. Yeah, I walked home.





But before I did, I had the chance to talk to one of the owners, Juan. He and his friends started their adventure in 2014 in their hometown of Caracas, where they opened up a stand at a baseball stadium. It got so popular that they started expanding in Venezuela and now, lucky for us, in Madrid.

I can't wait to go back to experience Los Costilla all over again, and have to try the fried chicken sandwich that Juan says is out of this world. I believe him.



# Los Costilla:

- IG: [@loscostillaes](#)
- Web: <https://www.loscostilla.es/>
- Address: Calle Ayala, 81
- Metro: Goya (Line 2)
- Phone: +34 (913) 56 67 31
- Schedule:
  - Sun – Wed: 1 pm – 4.30 pm & 8pm – 11pm
  - ☐Thur – Sat: 1 pm- 4.30 pm & 8 pm – 11.30 pm